

Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project

Wetlands Managers Group Report

November 29, 2001

2001-2002 Work Plan Update

At the May 18, 2001, meeting, the Board of Governors approved the Wetlands Recovery Project 2001-2002 Work Plan. This work plan included 49 acquisition, restoration, and planning projects from throughout Southern California. Following this meeting, the Coastal Conservancy began working with local partners to implement these projects. To date, fourteen projects have been funded, and three acquisitions have been successfully completed – Huntington Beach Wetlands Edison property, Arroyo Hondo Ranch, and Cold Creek Riparian Parcels. In addition, the San Elijo Lagoon Tidal Circulation Program augmentation was also completed. Due to the large number of projects and limited staff resources, the Conservancy has not yet begun work on some of the projects. The Coastal Conservancy will initiate work on these projects as quickly as staff resources allow.

In August, a financial update was circulated to the Board of Governors. This showed that the Wetlands Recovery Project had approximately \$9.5 million in state funding available at the start of the 2001-2002 fiscal year. \$625,000 was encumbered between July and October, and more than \$8 million is expected to be encumbered within the next six months. The Conservancy anticipates that it will expend all of the remaining WRP funds before the end of the fiscal year. In October, the National Marine Fisheries Service approved a \$400,000 grant to the WRP for steelhead recovery projects. These funds will be used for the Solstice Creek project and three other steelhead efforts under development. Attachment 1 provides an updated financial report.

The rest of this report provides a brief status report on each of the 49 projects on the Work Plan.

Project Status

1. **Tijuana River Valley Invasive Plant Control Program**– Project funding was approved in June 2001. The Coastal Conservancy is working with the Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association (SWIA) to refine the scope of work for this project. Implementation is expected to begin in Spring 2002.
2. **Goat Canyon Enhancement Project** – The Draft EIR/EIS for this project was released in October 2001, and is now undergoing public review. The project is currently scheduled to begin construction in the Fall of 2002; however, several coordination requirements could potentially delay this schedule by a year. It is expected that funding for this project will be approved in early 2002.

3. **Otay Mesa Vernal Pools Acquisition** – The WRP Work Plan recommends contributing about 10 percent of the funding for this acquisition. The County of San Diego is identifying additional funding sources to complete the project.
4. **Famosa Slough Culvert Extension and Retrofit** – The City of San Diego is ready to begin preparation of an environmental review document, permits, and the final design and engineering plans for the culvert extension and reactivation. Funding for this phase of the project is expected to be approved by the Coastal Conservancy at its December 6, 2001 meeting.
5. **Rose Creek Enhancement Plan** – The Conservancy has begun preliminary discussions with The Nature School regarding this project. Further project development is needed.
6. **Los Penasquitos Hydrology Study** – Funding for the Los Penasquitos Hydrology Study was approved by the Conservancy at its September 2001 meeting. The study will model the hydrology in the watershed and lagoon in order to identify options for reducing flows of sediment and excess freshwater into the lagoon. The study will take approximately one year to complete. There is approximately \$1 million in funding from Proposition 13 to implement this project.
7. **San Elijo Lagoon Acquisition Program** – Funding for the San Elijo Lagoon Acquisition Program was approved at the Coastal Conservancy's June 2001 meeting. The first acquisition under this program will be a 17 acre parcel adjacent to the lagoon, through which Lux Creek flows. The San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy is working with the Coastal Conservancy to identify additional parcels for acquisition.
8. **San Elijo Lagoon Non-native Plant Management** – Funding for the San Elijo Lagoon Non-native Plant Management program was approved at the Conservancy's October 2001 meeting. This project will map invasive exotic species throughout the San Elijo Ecological Reserve, and then develop a comprehensive removal and management plan for the most problematic species.
9. **San Elijo Lagoon Tidal Circulation Program Augmentation** – Additional funding for the San Elijo Lagoon Tidal Circulation Program was approved at the Conservancy's May 2001 meeting. The endowment account was augmented in June and this project is now complete.
10. **Escondido Creek Restoration, Bumann Site** – The WRP has not begun work on this project due to limited staff resources. The Coastal Conservancy will begin work on remaining projects as quickly as possible.
11. **ESD Park Riparian Restoration (Cottonwood Creek)** – The WRP has not begun work on this project due to limited staff resources. The Coastal Conservancy will begin work on remaining projects as quickly as possible.
12. **Buena Vista Creek Acquisition, Sherman Parcel** – Coastal Conservancy staff is performing a more detailed analysis of the resource value of this parcel in order to make a recommendation on the proportional share of the acquisition cost that the WRP should provide.

13. **Wood Canyon Stream Stabilization and Restoration** – The WRP has not begun work on this project due to limited staff resources. The Coastal Conservancy will begin work on remaining projects as quickly as possible.
14. **Aliso Creek Dairy Fork Biofiltration Basin** – The WRP has not begun work on this project due to limited staff resources. The Coastal Conservancy will begin work on remaining projects as quickly as possible.
15. **San Joaquin Marsh Enhancement - Phase II** – The Coastal Conservancy is working with the U.C. Natural Reserve System to finalize the scope of work for preparing final design and engineering plans, permits, and an environmental review document for Phase II activities. It is expected that this project will be funded in early 2002. The detailed planning phase will take approximately one year.
16. **Serrano Creek Stabilization and Restoration** – The Coastal Conservancy has had preliminary discussions with the County of Orange regarding this project. The project plan, environmental review, and engineering designs are complete. The County is applying for permits.
17. **Huntington Beach Acquisitions** – In October 2001, the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy completed acquisition of the Huntington Beach wetlands parcel owned by Southern California Edison. The Coastal Conservancy is preparing a new appraisal for the Daisy Piccirelli property, which straddles Magnolia Street. The new appraisal will address concerns raised by the Conservancy and the landowners with two previous appraisals.
18. **Talbert Marsh Tidal Channel Enhancement Design** – The Coastal Conservancy is working with the County and the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy (HBWC) to revise and refine the scope of work for this project. This project will be funded with monies already granted to the HBWC.
19. **Hellman Ranch Acquisition (Los Cerritos)** – The property appraisal was completed in Summer 2001. The Wildlife Conservation Board is negotiating a purchase agreement with the landowners.
20. **Bryant Acquisition (Los Cerritos)** – The Trust for Public Land is taking the lead on the negotiations for acquisition of the Bryant Ranch. The property appraisal is in preparation.
21. **Bixby Ranch Company Acquisition (Los Cerritos)** – The Trust for Public Land is taking the lead on the negotiations for acquisition of the Bixby Ranch. There are several significant issues that need to be resolved, and the landowners have expressed some uncertainty about wanting to move forward with the project.
22. **Los Cerritos Wetlands Conceptual Restoration Plan** – The preliminary phase of restoration planning for the Los Cerritos wetlands is expected to begin in early 2002. Planning will initially focus on the Hellman property, since negotiations for acquiring this property are substantially further along than for the other two properties.

23. **Colorado Lagoon Restoration Project** – Plans to modify a county storm drain that empties into Colorado Lagoon could potentially conflict with the Colorado Lagoon Restoration Project. Coastal Conservancy staff are coordinating with Los Angeles County and the City of Long Beach to resolve this potential conflict.
24. **El Dorado Wetlands Restoration Plan** – The WRP has not begun work on this project due to limited staff resources. The Coastal Conservancy will begin work on remaining projects as quickly as possible.
25. **Coyote Creek Watershed Plan** – The WRP has not begun work on this project due to limited staff resources. The Coastal Conservancy will begin work on remaining projects as quickly as possible.
26. **Lower Los Angeles River Acquisitions** – Conservancy staff are working with the City of Long Beach on several potential acquisition sites. No acquisition is anticipated within the next six months.
27. **Lower Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Habitat Needs Assessment** – Coastal Conservancy staff are refining the scope of work for the Habitat Needs Assessment. Coastal Conservancy approval of funding is expected in early 2002.
28. **Big Tujunga Wash Revegetation and Restoration** – The WRP has not begun work on this project due to limited staff resources. The Coastal Conservancy will begin work on remaining projects as quickly as possible.
29. **Upper Zuniga Road Acquisitions** – Funding for the Upper Zuniga Road acquisition was approved by the Conservancy at its May 2001 meeting. The acquisition is nearly completed.
30. **Cold Creek Riparian Acquisition** – Funding for the Cold Creek Riparian acquisition was approved by the Conservancy at its June 2001 meeting. The acquisition was completed in October 2001.
31. **Malibu Lagoon Habitat Enhancement** – The WRP has not begun work on this project due to limited staff resources. The Coastal Conservancy will begin work on remaining projects as quickly as possible.
32. **Upper Malibu Creek Feasibility Study (Rindge Dam)** – The Department of Parks and Recreation and the Army Corps of Engineers are negotiating a local sponsor agreement for the project. The Feasibility Study will look at options for removing barriers to fish passage, including the possible removal of Rindge Dam. Work on the Feasibility Study will commence once the local sponsor agreement has been signed by both parties.
33. **Malibu Lagoon Water Level Control Project** – The Department of Parks and Recreation has is preparing a plan for this project which involves installing an inflatable weir to control water levels in the lagoon during the dry season.

34. **Malibu Creek Arundo Removal Project** – The Malibu Creek Arundo Removal Project is being funded by the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Project. WRP funds will not be needed for the project.
35. **Solstice Creek Steelhead Enhancement** – Funding for final design plans and permits was approved by the Coastal Conservancy in March 2001. The project will address several steelhead passage barriers in the creek. Implementation of this project could begin by Fall 2002.
36. **Lower Conejo Creek Acquisition** – Negotiations continue with the project partners and the landowner. The Habitat Subcommittee of the Calleguas Creek Watershed Steering Committee has approved the acquisition as a priority. A conceptual restoration plan is being prepared. Acquisition is expected in early 2002.
37. **Grimes Canyon Stream Restoration Project** – Funding for the Grimes Canyon Stream Restoration Project was approved by the Conservancy at its June 2001 meeting. The project should be complete by the end of 2001.
38. **Ormond Beach Wetlands Acquisition** – The Conservancy is investigating the possibility of re-opening negotiations for acquisition of the Edison property. The Conservancy has opened discussions with the City of Oxnard and MWD for acquisition of the MWD property.
39. **Ormond Beach Wetlands Restoration Plan** – The Conservancy is working with project partners to develop a scope of work for this Restoration Plan. Approval of funding for this project is expected by early 2002. The plan will take approximately 18 months to prepare.
40. **Santa Clara River Parkway Acquisitions** – In June, the Coastal Conservancy approved \$1 million of WRP funds for acquisition along the Santa Clara River. The Coastal Conservancy is pursuing several acquisitions simultaneously. This phase of the project should be complete by Summer 2002.
41. **Ventura River Zellerbach Property Acquisition** – The WRP has not begun work on this project due to limited staff resources. The Coastal Conservancy will begin work on remaining projects as quickly as possible.
42. **Ventura River Arundo Removal Project** – Coastal Conservancy staff are working with the Ventura Arundo Task Force to refine the scope of work for this project. Funding for this project may be approved in Spring 2002.
43. **Carpinteria Salt Marsh, Basin 1, Final Design** – Final design and engineering plans are almost complete. The project will be ready for implementation in approximately one year, provided sufficient funding can be secured. No additional funds will be needed for the planning phase of the project.
44. **Summerland/Greenwell Preserve Restoration** – Funding for the Summerland/Greenwell Preserve Restoration project was approved by the Coastal Conservancy at its September 2001 meeting. Implementation of the project is expected to take approximately one year.

45. **Goleta Slough Tidal Restoration Study** – The planning phase of the tidal restoration study commenced in March 2001 and will take approximately one year to complete.
46. **Devereux Slough/Ellwood Mesa Regional Plan** – The scope of this project has been expanded to include property owned by the University of California. The project now encompasses almost all of the lower Devereux Slough watershed. The plan is being developed by the County in cooperation with U.C. and the main private landowner. Funding for the Devereux Slough/Ellwood Mesa Regional Plan was approved by the Coastal Conservancy at its September 2001 meeting.
47. **Arroyo Hondo Ranch Acquisition** – Acquisition of this property was completed in October 2001. The Coastal Conservancy will work with the Land Trust of Santa Barbara to determine what resource enhancements and public access improvements are needed on the property.
48. **WRP Small Grants Program** – Funding for the WRP Small Grants Program was approved by the Conservancy in June 2001. Environment Now is in the process of hiring a program manager. The small grants should become available in early 2002.
49. **WRP Technical Assistance and Program Administration** – Funding for the WRP public outreach program is expected to be approved at the December 2001 Conservancy meeting. Environment Now has secured a \$609,000 from the State Water Resources Control Board to provide additional assistance to each of the five County Task Forces.

**Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project
2001-2002 Work Plan – Financial Update (10/31/01)**

Balance of available funds as 5/1/01	\$23,626,755
Projects Funded by Conservancy from 5/1/01-6/30/01	
Tijuana River Valley Arundo Eradication Project	(\$500,000)
San Elijo Lagoon Acquisition Program	(\$2,000,000)
San Elijo Lagoon Tidal Circulation Program Augmentation	(\$700,000)
Bixby Acquisition (Los Cerritos Wetlands)	(\$11,400,000)
Upper Zuniga Road Acquisitions	(\$250,000)
Cold Creek Riparian Upland Acquisition	(\$719,000)
Grimes Canyon Stream Restoration Project	(\$220,000)
Santa Clara River Parkway Acquisitions	(\$1,000,000)
WRP Small Grants Program	(\$250,000)
Subtotal	(\$17,039,000)
Balance of funds at end of FY 00/01	\$6,587,755
2001-2002 Appropriation	\$2,950,000
Balance of funds at start of FY 01/02	\$9,537,755
Projects Funded by the Conservancy from 7/1/01 to 10/31/01	
Los Penasquitos Hydrology and Sedimentation Study	(\$250,000)
San Elijo Lagoon Non-native Plant Management	(\$225,000)
Summerland/Greenwell Preserve	(\$40,000)
Devereux Slough/Ellwood Mesa Regional Plan	(\$110,000)
Subtotal	(\$625,000)
Projected expenditures in next 6 months	
Goat Canyon Enhancement Project	(\$6,000,000)
Famosa Slough Culvert Extension	(\$70,500)
Rose Creek Enhancements	(\$75,000)
San Joaquin Marsh Enhancement --Phase II Planning	(\$250,000)
Serrano Creek Stabilization and Enhancement	(\$500,000)
Colorado Lagoon Restoration Project	(\$200,000)
LA/San Gabriel River Habitat Needs Assessment	(\$100,000)
Big Tujunga Wash Revegetation and Restoration	(\$83,000)
Malibu Lagoon Water Level Control Project	(\$150,000)
Lower Conejo Creek Acquisition	(\$750,000)
Ormond Beach Wetlands Restoration Plan	(\$200,000)
Ventura River Arundo Removal Project	(\$159,500)
WRP Technical Assistance	(\$250,000)
Subtotal	(\$8,788,000)
Projected balance of funds as of 5/1/02	\$124,755